



SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF DEVADASIS UNDER THE CHOLAS

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Abstract:

The history of the *devadasi* system was very ancient. It was a universal phenomenon in the olden days. It was practiced all over the world in one form or the other, with certain variations. Its origin could be attributed to the fertility cult, which was very dominant in the ancient world. The *devadasi* system was widely prevalent in ancient India. It is not clear when the system originated in Tamilnadu. However, adequate materials are not available to establish the fact that the system was it vogue in Tamilnadu before the Sangam Age. The life of a *devadasi* was not an easy one. To become a *devadasi* a girl has to go through a few *samskaras* (rites of passage). These are the ritual marriage, branding ceremony, initiation into the performing arts, debut (*arangerru*), duties, and funereal honours. These rituals transform an 'ordinary' girl into an 'ever-auspicious female.' The inscriptions and literature of the Cholas provide ample for sketching the history of the *devadasi* system. Delving deeply into the system of Devadasi, one can easily bring all the matters as greenery scenes in the serene even a frizzle of facts without falling down. The *Devadasis*, though performed multifaceted works, they were entirely converged towards cultural and spiritual services. It is clearly known that their lives lay in two strata. Those who were in the upper stratum, lead prestigious life having been paid grants-in-aid with honours and privileges. Whereas those in the low stratum less paid and did manual works for daily allowances. During Sangam Age and after, especially during the period of the Cholas, the sculptures, inscriptions, *Ula* literature and various other sources of those days provide ample evidences to trace their history. We are in the limelight regarding the origin of the *devadasi* system and how it flourished. The names and other particulars of some 400 dancers are furnished in the inscriptions. This system covers *Talliccheri* very broadly. The girls were either voluntarily engaged or made to be Devadasis by their relatives, especially by their parents. The dancing girls' adornment from the hair to heels with valuable costumes and ornaments show how affluent they were. Their dances were performed in *Mandapas* and *Arankas* in great temples. The varieties of music and the instruments, the postures of dancers and *karanas* show their expertise in the field. It is true that the *Devadasis* got from the public both acclamation and condemnation.

Key Words: *Devadasi*, Cholas, Ornaments, Dress, Grant of Privileges, Cosmetics & Funeral Honours

Introduction:

The history of the *devadasi* system was very ancient. It was a universal phenomenon in the olden days. It was practiced all over the world in one form or the other, with certain variations. Its origin could be attributed to the fertility cult, which was very dominant in the ancient world. The *devadasi* system was widely prevalent in ancient India. It is not clear when the system originated in Tamilnadu. Still certain a scholar gives it a pure Tamil origin, and as old as the temple in South India. However, adequate materials are not available to establish the fact that the system was it vogue in Tamilnadu before the Sangam Age.

In medieval Tamil Nadu, it was one of the very dominant socio-religious institutions. It evolved as a result of the fusion of many such socio-religious and cultural institutions. The traces could be found in the Sangam literature. It appears to have become an institution towards the end of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. under the patronage of the Pallavas and the Pandyas, who were influenced by the *Bhakti* movement and the agamic traditions, and it was institutionalized in their temples. It was extended throughout Tamilnadu under the liberal support of the Cholas and the later Pandyas. The literary works and inscriptions insist on their beauty as an essential qualification. The *Periyapuranam* and the *Tiruvapurpuranam*, contain references to the beauty of the *devadasis* of the Tiruvarur Temple. An inscription addresses a *devadasi* as *alakilumalakiya* (beauty of beauties). These may indicate the strict moral continence enjoined on them. However, it was not insisted on the low grade *devadasis*.

Social Status of Devadasis:

The life of a *devadasi* was not an easy one. To become a *devadasi* a girl has to go through a few *samskaras* (rites of passage). These are the ritual marriage, branding ceremony, initiation into the performing arts, debut (*arangerru*), duties, and funereal honours. These rituals transform an 'ordinary' girl into an 'ever-auspicious female'.

The Ratnagiri inscriptions mentions that the *devadasis* were given due respect in the temples where they rendered service. In society too, they were equally treated with others. They contributed donations to temples like others used to do. An inscription says that Perur Kottisvarar temple *devadasis* were offered food.

The food supplier to *devadasis* was Thiraiyan Devarkandan, Thanguvarana Uttama Chola Valrathrayan during the time of Rajarajan I.

According to Vadakadu's inscriptions, a *devaradiyar* denoted lamps to the temple and additionally, it is inscribed that nobody could not find fault with her noble services of lamp burning. The lamps then had the names as follows: *Pakal Vilakku*. The lamp burning at the *sandhya* time of the evening was called *Sandhya Vilakku*. The lamp burning in the presence both the sun and the moon was called *Chandrathithaval*. The lamp burning till the reign of the stars and moon was called as *asandradara*. From the 'Udaiyarkudi' inscription it is known that the donors gifted the *vilakkus* and the allied expenditures, were given to the business people (*Viyaparikal*) and *Variyattars*. From the words above inscriptions it is clear that the Mandradiyars took the responsibilities of lamps-Dharma (*Vilakku-dharma*) and supervision of lamp burning.

Ritual Marriage:

Any new entrant to temple service was received after the conduct of a marriage ceremony. It was a kind of spiritual marriage (*hieros gamos* as in ancient Greek religion). Spiritual marriage means participation in divine life. *Kamikagama* calls that kind of marriage as *pottuk-kattu* (trinket tying). In some other places, it was called *gajje puje* (worship of the ankle-bells). It refers to the formal sacred marriage ceremony and the dedication of the girls to the temple. Records of the earlier age do not give details about the conduct of the ritual. An unpublished inscription (of the 11th -12th century A.D.) from the Bhuloganathar Temple at Tirumangalam (near Mayavaram) gives some details of the spiritual marriage. It refers to such divine marriages as *pottuk-kattu* (trinket tying), a practice which became very runs as follows: *Sri bhunamattuponnittuk-konda yerra ana Viraperumal manikkam*.

Moreover, *Kamikagama* prescribes certain age limits to the marriage of the new entrants. According to it a *rudra-dasi* should be married to the deity at the age of seven, eight and before the end of nine respectively. It advises that the marriage should be solemnised in an auspicious day, at the most auspicious hour. The *acarya*, who had already observed the necessary fasts, should alone conduct the ceremony amidst all relatives. After the strict observance of the assigned *vratas* (fasts), the girl was to be seated in front of the sanctum sanctorum facing northward. The *acarya*, who had already tied the tall (trinket) around the idol, should untie it and tie it around the neck of the girl. The girl, thus married, according to a record of A.D. 1189, and was honoured as *tiruvatkaippattal* (she who had wedded God). Epigraphic and literary materials throw light on a few instances of girls thus married to the deity. Andal's marriage with Sri Ranganatha is conducted as an earliest reference to a 'bridal' dedication. Followed by her fosterfather, kinsmen and relatives; Antal was taken to Srinrangam on an auspicious day. After the observance of some rites, *kappunan* (*mangalanan-tali-trinket*) was tied round her neck, 48 and she was left at the feet of the Sri Ranganatha appears to be a typical example of the dedication of an *emperumanaṭiyar* (servant of God).

Branding Ceremony:

The girls thus married were branded with some symbol (*muttirai*) to show their perpetual bondage to the temples. The mark indicated two things: (i) No freedom to the slave-girl to go out of temple service, (ii) Clearly identified to which temple Siva or Vishnu, she belonged to. It does not appear to be a universally accepted practice; hence very seldom the branding was done. According to *Bhakti* literature, the *aṭiyar* (devotee) as a mark of self surrender used to brand him with a symbol on the body. Thus Śiva devotees branded themselves with the trident (*sula*) or bull (*risabha*) mark. St. Appar had the impression of *sula* and *risabha* (*idapa*) on his body. He is said to have done it in the *thunkanaimadam* of the Temple of Tiruppennadakam.

Several epigraphs of this period refer to the practice of branding slaves in temples. Inscriptions tell that *devadasis* of the Siva temples were branded with the trident mark and those of Vishnu temples with *sankha* (conchshell) or *cakra* (discus) marks. According to an inscription, *devadasis* and cows (surrendered to the temples) were branded with the trident mark (*sula ilaccinai*). An inscription reads as follows, *tiruvilaiccinaiyum ittuc-chandrattavaral nerkkuruvadakkond* (agreed to serve God as long as Sun and Moon exist and therefore branded with the sacred symbols.)

Sacred marriages were sometimes not adhered too much against the covenant. Many of them got married either certain influential individuals or became concubines of priests or the reigning monarchs or chiefs. An inscription of A.D. 1049 says that one Chatural Charuri, a *devadasi* of Tiruvorriyur Temple was the wife (*agamudaiyal* or *illal*) of one Nagan Perungadan. Paravai Nacchiyar, the *rudra-ganikal* of the Tiruvarur Temple was the wife of St. Sundarar. It is learnt from his observation that they were not allowed to serve God after their marriage with mortals. Even after their having broken the covenant, they appear to have served God. Rajaraja I and Rajendra I took a few of them as their mistresses. The inscription during the first Rajarajan 31st anniversary of ruling (governance) introduces one *devadasi* Sathuran Sathuri as the wife (*Agamudaiyal*) of Nagan Perungadan.

The Nannilam Taluk in Atchutha Mangalam *koyil* Tower inscription mentions a *Devadasi*'s marriage. In the inscriptions of Chola period the names of the *devadasis* and their sons and daughter's names are mentioned. In Kayilaya-natharkoyil of Rishiyur, the *devadasis* Kanga and her daughter Periyanchi Narpathionnayiram-manickam, are noted. In the Ramalingesvara-koyil Marangyur, the temple *devadasi* *Kolam*

Kondai and her daughter Madalvi are noted. In the Annamalaiyar-koyil at Tiruvannamalai the *devadasi* Vambai and her daughter 'Devi' Kovanarkula are noted. One of the inscriptions in the Abhiramesvaran-koyil at Tiruvamattur mentions that one *devadasi* from Ekamparanathar-koyil at Kanchipuram, donated cows for burning *Sandhi Vilakku* in memorium her daughter's death.

An inscription from Tiruvorriyur Temple of the time of Virarajendra (A.D.1063-1070) records that it was aimed at perpetuation of the *mangalyam* (marriage badge) of the queen and the long life of the king and their king sons. Dedication to sacred service was done irrespective of caste and social considerations. In the beginning, the girls were from royal and aristocratic families, *padiyilar* family and Kaikkola. Some girls came forward by self inspiration to dedicate themselves to sacred service. Royal maids like *Kilanadigal* the daughter of Sthanu Ravi (A.D. 844-855) took to temple service out of devotion and dedication. They never accepted any remuneration or enjoyed any perquisites. The *vellattikal* referred to in the Parthibasek-harapuram Copper-plates, reveal that the women from the *Padiyilars* community were free. Paravai Nacchiyar, the *rudra-ganka* of the Temple of Tiruvarur, came from the *padiyilar* family. Therefore it would appear that in the beginning, caste was not a consideration for the sacred service. Dedication of these girls to temple service was done perhaps with the intention of serving the God for fulfilling certain vows of desires or for eking out a living there. Almost all these girls were happy to have the suffix *adigal* with their names. In later times, all these streams became synonymous with the *devadasis*.

Dwelling Place:

In *Taliccheri* inscriptions of Tanjavur belonging to king Rajaraja I, provides a detail of 400 *devadasis* allotted one house per head in North and South parts of the *Taliccheri*. Those were called as Northern *Siragu* (Northern Rows) and Southern *Siragu* (Southern rows). In the western part they had the dancing centre. An inscription of Rajendra Cholas mentioned that there were 102 *Taliccheris* and among these 49 were in the neighborhood to the temple and the remaining 53 in the outskirts of Tanjavur. Some other inscriptions also mention about the *Taliccheri*. The inscription in Kundavai Vinnagar-koyil at Tatapuram indicates the *Taliccheri* at Ravikula Manicka Isvaram and the Adiyappan koyil inscription at Kilkasakkudi speaks about the *Tirutaliccheri*. The inscription in Tanjore Rajarajesvaram mentions the *Taliccheri*.

The *Devadasis* were also allotted living plots in Karuvur, Anilayappar koyil Madai Vilagam, Ratnagiri Sivankoyil, Madai Vilagam, Udumalapet, Sankiramanallu Sivan koyil (Sembian Madevi period), Sakaramanallu Thirugandisvarar koyil (notes *devadasi* Periyannachi of Periya Nattu Mangai) Madai Vilagam (1st house), Tiruvalanculi koyil Thirumadai Vilagam (Atkondan Devum Thiruvum Udaiyalum, Kilakkadaia Nindral – notes *devadasis*). Those who did not live in *Taliccheri* and Madai Vilagam were allotted houses in the Neighborhood of the temples.

Houses were allotted to the *devadasis* in some temples deities are noted as follows: Umaialvi (Azhalignum Azhagiya Deva *Talaikkoli*) of Tyagarajar koyil of Tiruvarur (lived in sannathi theru vada *Siragu*), Bagagavathi (Enruth Tiruvudaiyal) Nellaiyapparkoyil, Tirunelveli was given a house in (Metri Ezhuntha Theru). The *devadasis* of Rajendra Cholasr Vinnagar Alvar in Mannarkoyil were given House *Manais*. Kūttāṭum Devanatchiyar (Olagamulutu-ṭaiya!) of Tiruvannamalar koyil was given housing place in Kīlateru (East Street). The 200 *Pathiliyars* in Arulalaperumal koil from Kancipuram were given houses.

Hair Dressing:

The dancers applied the paste of the gooseberry and *kasthuri* on their heads. Later they bathed and then they warmed their hair with *Akirkupakai*. Then they spreaded the hair and de-knotted the hair-knots with their nails. It was after this that they smeared *Karpura* powders. They plaited their dark hair with the flowers *Kaḷunirmalar* and also *Kuvalaitatai*. On the divisions in the hair they added beautiful small flower garlands, pearl garlands, bead garlands and different kinds of decoration in their respective places of the body. The hair-do was just put into a knot or ball. The knots were either at the back of the head or side-wise. Only a few of them plaited their hair into a lengthy manner, decorated it with flower garlands, applied 'Kasthuri' and danced with a sweet odor wafting around them.

Ornaments:

From the sculptures and literatures it is understood, that adorning from head to the legs with the ornaments for dancing was the fillip of the days. These ornaments were made up of various types of beads; gold and silver were adorned in accordance with the dance and the person who danced.

(a) Head Ornament: From sculptures it is understood the head ornaments were in use. They were the *Toyyakam*, *Pūrapalai*, *Pulakam* and *Sulamani*; *Thoiyaham* is appended to a series of chains and is matched with the hair-dress. The series of chains are known as *Pūrapalai*. *Purapalai* which is known as *Thoyiham* and 'Seethevi' is a part of *Thoyiham*. It is also known as *Ilambaham*. This is understood from the line in 'Seevahasinthamani', 'Aranga Ani Nadaga Magalir Ayanoothal Ilambagam'. These head ornaments are found in Kumbhakonam, Nagesvara temple and the dancing girl's paintings of the Cholas. The *Pataikai* worn on the forehead was known as the *Pattam*. This was like a strip either put up on the top of the forehead separately or along with the head decoration in a strip. This *Pattam* was of three types *Rathina Pattam*, *Puppattam* and *Patrapattam*.

(b) Ear Ornaments: Different kinds of ear ornaments are seen in the sculptures. Among them *Kudambai* and *Kuzhai* are significant. In the bore of the ear, that has been allowed to grow the roll of the Palmira leaf, in squared and inserted which is known as *Kudumbai*. This is also called *Patrakundalam*. Instead of the Palmira leaf the golden leaf was also used; cf. *Seevaha sinthamani* 258 talks of golden leaf *sempon olai*. In the sculpture that reveals the dancing postures the ear ornament 'Kudambai' is found. The ear ornaments known as *Kuzhai* and *Kundalam* are also found in the sculptures. The books on sculptures introduce three types of 'Kundalams' they are *Simakundalam*, *Viyalakundalam* fashion *Makarakundalam*. Among these the *Makarakundalam* fashion in the model of the *Mahara* fish is found in the sculptures. Distinctively enough in the dancing posture of Siva *Makara Kundalam* is present. Among the sculptures found in the Pullamankai and Melaperumpallam temples some of them bear the *Makara Kundalam*. Along with the *Makara Kundalam* there were the ear-rings that positioned in the ears of the dancing ladies. *Sinthamani* speaks of the *Kundalam* that looked like the *Indiravil* (rainbow). The ear ornament that was flat rounded and embedded with precious stones was known as *katipu*. During the reign of the Cholas, the lady dancers wore this *katipu* with great delight is known from the sculptures in the Kumbakonam Nageshwarar temple and Melaperumpallam Valampuranathar temples.

(c) Neck Ornaments: The female dancers of the Cholas period danced wearing neck ornaments made of gold and precious stones. The most important ones are *Kandikai*, *Chavadi*, *Cherapali*, *Maniyaram*, *Muttaram* and gold chain with the *Patakkam*. Since the three neck ornament like the *Kandikai*, *Charapali* and *Chavadi* were found in the sculptures in the Cholas period, it can be known, that the dancers worn there ornaments. The sculptures in the Melaperumpallam Valampurinathar temple prove that the female dancers wore long slender pearl chains. Different varieties of coloured stones were studded on ornaments. Some ornaments were made of the fire-red coloured beads. A lady of 'Tirukailaya' engaged in a *nanaula* describes about the way how she decorated herself; the word *Kanti* noted in *Kailaya Ula* refers to the *Kantikai* worn as a neck ornament.

(d) Hand Ornaments: In the sculptures of the Cholas period the dancers are found wearing *Kadavalai*, *Tolvalai*, hand bangles, *Pariagam* and finger rings. In the sculptures on the *griva* of the *vimāna* of Tirusenturai Chandrasekhara temple a female dancer is seen wearing finger-rings. Another sculpture of a lady dancer bears the finger-ring in Tenneri Sivan temple. The *Sinthamani* elaborates about the varied types of finger-rings worn by the female artists.

(e) Waist-Ornaments: The waist ornaments were utilized in two ways. They not only enhance the beauty of the waist, but also tighten the dress worn around the waist. The two waists ornaments are the *Mekalai* and *Araipattikai*. The *Sinthamani* speaks of the *Mekalai* worn by the female dancer.

(f) Ornaments Worn around the Legs:

The *Sinthamani* lists out the ornaments worn around the legs of the female dancers. *Thirukailaya Gnanalla* identifies the ornaments worn by the lady dancers. Among them the *Pariyakam* was one-third of the breadth of *cilampu*. This would be joined with chains to the leg-finger rings. This significant ornament of the ladies of the Cholas period was rare. Ornaments that are found in the sculptures and literatures were wrought in valuable beads, pearls, gold and silver as is known from the inscriptions.

Among them a few inscriptions at Rajarajesvaram and a few of the inscriptions on the Tiruvaiyaru Ayyarappar temple bear testimonies to this fact. The waist ornaments namely *Araipattikai* of different types were donated in those days to the godly figures. The designing technology is known from the inscriptions of the twenty-ninth year of the rule of Rajaraja I. The *Tirupattikai* with *silampiri mukam* consisted of floral designs decorated with precious stones and pearls and it cost twenty-six kalanju of gold inclusive of tax to the Government. The same inscription speaks about the golden bangles that were studded with pearls. Another inscription says about the 'Talvadam' embedded with pearls.

Dress:

Different types of dress are found in the sculptures pertaining to dance in the days of Cholas. Many of them were worn from the waist downward. There is no dress worn to conceal the upper part of the body. In many of the sculptures there is only a light dress worn on the top. In certain sculptures there are the silk dresses. To identify them it is best to read the *Sirpacennul*. The edges of the silk dress were heavy, overflowing on the sides. Besides the shawl was merged with the body while the edges were shown prominently. These were without any shrink and were as though well ironed.

Perfumes and Cosmetics:

There were beauticians who made the make-up according to the rules given in the books. It was significant following their guidelines and also due to their experience. The art of beautifying and the efficiency of the beauticians are well told in the *Sinthamani*. In order to make their hair rich and fragrant the female dancers used the gooseberry paste, *kasthuri* and also perfumed oil. They also bathed in the water that was mixed with a aromatics. After they dried their hair well, they steamed their hair with scents. Besides to give a fragrant smell they used *Sithari*. Along with the smearing of the body with sandal paste (*cantaṇam*) there was the custom of writing on the shoulders and the part ions of the breasts. The fragment powder was smeared all over the body. The powder made of the pollen grains of the flowers was also smeared to give a pleasant odor. They applied oil

to the hair and plaited the hair or else they heaped the hair together and made it into a knot. There they put different kinds of flowers made into garlands.

Flowers like *kongam*, *konrai*, *vengai*, *kuvalai*, *mallikai*, *talai*, *canpakam* were employed to adorn the head. Inside the hair the leaf of the flower *kulavai* was inserted. The inscriptions of the Cholas period inform that the artists who performed the *kuttu* spread the body with the rice flour, *mai* oil and turmeric powder. The inscription in Tiruvisalur Pitcha Tevar temple speaks about this. It also says that the committee ordered for the celebration of the temple and provide needed for the make-up materials for those who perform *Kuttu* and for the musicians. Hence when an Act was under enactment, they were given the needed accessories like *mai*, oil, powdered rice to smear on the body, turmeric powder and saree from the washerman. For the musicians *Kudamulavu* was given.

Economic Condition:

Working Situations:

Those who were wellversed and skilled in singing and dancing with inspiration were arranged for learning singing and dancing. In temples there were *Panar* to teach songs, *Nattuvar* for teaching dances, including *Thalaikozhiyar Koothasanars* were available. Those devadasis having not learnt singing and dancing and those who passed the young stage were assigned to perform other works pertaining to temple service. These facts are revealed from the inscription found in Tiru Vetriyur and Kulathoor.

Under the *Devaradiyar* cadre, there were both male and female sexes. But in the male cadre they were less in number. All the facilities such as food, cloth and Shelter were provided by the temple administration in order to make up the expenditure incurred on them and their legal heirs also. *Pati-ilar*, *Tali-ilar* and *Taliccheri devadasis* were appointed by the king and those were under cadres just above the other *devadasis*. An inscription of Rajaraja at Thathapuram reveals that there was one festival called *Vettai Thiruvilā* in Kundavai-vinnagam-koyil. That festival was celebrated with gaiety and grandeur, and 32 *Taliccheri Devadasis* from Ravikula Manikka Isvaram koyil performed the singing and dancings. From this one, one can understand that the devadasis belonging to one temple participated in the *Viḷas* (festivals) celebrated in other temples.

The inscriptions in *Taliccheri* of Tanjavur Rajarajesvaram and Vadakailasam koyil in Tiruvaiyaru Ayyarappa koyil premises tells the fact that the *Devadasis* were given house facility and 100 kalam paddy per year livelihood and reimbursement for other expenditures. *Pathiliyar* were called as *Thalaikoḷis*. They performed their dancing only in the courts and temples. They were for special performances and the *Thalilayar* for common performances.

Service Security:

In *Taliccheri* inscription, it is known that if in case of one *devadasis* (performing singing and dancing) either might have died or migrated to other nation. Her close relative who had both the talents of singing and dancing was appointed in her place and was permitted all the benefits that she enjoyed. In the event of no such relationship was available there would be new appointment with only paddy as payment and not with other benefits. The same inscription says that, during festivals in Vilvarayan Isvarar koyil at Nallur a devadasi, Udai Nachiyar alias Kulothunga Chola Manickam who performed Kakkaiyadi, and recited *Tiruvempavai*, died. As there were no relative for her to be appointed in her place, one *Devadasi*, Poomal the daughter of Porkoil Nangai was appointed in her place.

Supervision:

The Cholas instituted official supervision to watch the activities of the *devadasis*. Their day to day duties were strictly supervised to guard against dereliction of duty, intrigues, misbehavior and misdeed. In certain cases, a steward was appointed to maintain discipline and also to attend to their welfare. The official supervision in Tanjore was known as *nayakanseiyya* (to supervise). The record further states that the four hundred *talichcherip-pendugal* were under the overall supervision of two supervisors, named Savur Paranjothi and Govinda Somanathan, in the Bankapur Temple the steward ranked equal to the dancemaster and each of them received five *mattars* (an unknown measure) of land. In Tanjore also the steward was kept on par with the dance-master, but below the rank of a *ganapati* (music-master) and above the rank of a *devadasis*. In some temples official supervision was taken up by the *sabha* and the *oor*. An inscription of A.D. 1002 states that the servants of the temple were supervised to ensure whether they fulfilled their obligations or not. The Official supervisions were not strictly enforced during the days of the later Cholas. It is evident from an inscription that the temple slaves defied the orders of the *sthanattar* (temple administrative officer) of the temple and ignored their regular duties.

Remuneration:

In recognition of their service, the *devadasis* were remunerated. The payments depended on the wealth and fame of the temples which employed them and also on the kings who patronized them. In some temples the wage paid was very meager, but in others it was lucrative. Remuneration was paid in kind and cash. It included cooked rice balls, paddy, clothes, lands (even villages) and other items. Allowance in cash was made for the purchase of dresses and meeting certain incidental expenses. It amounted to a few gold coins per annum. Payments for the work done in temples were mainly in kind. The quantity of grains given was decided at the

time of the grant or it varied according to harvest in the land gifted for such purposes. The lands gifted for a particular service in a temple were cultivated by tenants who were expected to ensure the quality of grain stipulated to the temple servants.

Payment:

In the Rajarajesvaram, the *Taliccheri devadasis* were given one-*veli* land producing one *kalam* paddy equivalent, *Pathiliyars*. In the Ayyarappar koyil Vilagam, they were given $\frac{3}{4}$ *veli* and 3 *maa* (3 kh) land by Rajaraja I, to each head. Rajendra I lessened this measure to $\frac{1}{2}$ *veli* and 1 *ma* (1 kh) respectively. It is interesting to note that the *devadasis* of Sivankoyil in Ilavanasur were given a whole village, Rajarajamangalam. One of the inscriptions of the time of Sembian Mahadevi from Konerirajapuram details the grant of paddy and land given as remuneration. The record runs as follows: "For sixty-seven *kalam* (one) tuni and one padakku of paddy each year at three nali every day for each of three (servants) who picked up flowers for the sacred temple and three who string them together, (was assigned land) at Pungudi (measuring) one half, one-eightieth and one by three hundred and twentieth.

Grant of Privileges:

In recognition of their commendable service, the *devadasis* were granted certain privileges. An inscription states that when the temple authorities signed a document with a certain officer a *devadasi* was asked to be a surety. They considered waving of *camaram* (fly-whisk) before the image during car procession a great privilege. For having installed some sacred images in the temples they were granted certain privileges. According to an inscription, an image of women in a temple pillar was called after a *devadasi* as Bhogamattal. Their beneficentiations have gone in records as *tevadiyal kattalai* (order of beneficentiation by a *devadasi*).

A selected few of them received royal protection, patronage and treatment. They were permitted to have the prefix *Nakkan* (Lord Siva) with their names. Some of them named themselves after saints, others were happy to have the names or surnames of kings. Highly accomplished and expert dancing girls were the recipients of high sounding titles like *talaikoli* (expert dancer who possessed the *talaikoli*, the mark of her expertise in dance) (Plate III) and *santik-kutti* (recipient of an honour for having enacted one of the many kinds of dances called *santikkuttu*). Having witnessed the dance performances of one Uravakkinatalaikkoyil, a Cholas king was pleased to order the renaming of villages as Uravakkinanallur. Impressed by their personalities and artistic attainments many of them were taken to royal concubineage a record Tiruvannamalai Temple says that one Konakkanar, the daughter of a certain Manikkattar, was a concubine of one Vanako-varaiyar.

Under Rajaraja I, Paravai Nacchiyar rose to the semi-divine position. Similarly, under Rajendra I, Nangai Paravai rose to that exalted position. Nangai Paravai, the *anukki* (personal attendant) attracted the attention of the monarch by her several religious beneficentiations. Among them were the installation of two *pavaivilakus* (women statues holding lamps), erection of a stone temple in the place of a mud temple and presentation of a large quantity of gold ornaments to the God and Goddess of Tiruvarur Temple.

The *pavaivilakus* commemorate the place where Rajendra I and Nangai Paravai stood and worshipped the Goddess in the temple. Their images in the worshipping pose are also there. Impressed by the activities, Rajendra I allowed her to sit near him in the royal chariot during a procession around the temple. The images of Nangai Paravai have been concentrated in other temples with royal honour. Under their successors, both Paravai Nacchiyar and Nangai Paravai were equality revered. Newly built shrines were called after them. New *pujas* were instituted in their honour and new and old villages were named after them.

The *Devadasis* performed multifaceted works that are entirely converged in cultural and spiritual services. It is clearly known that their lives to lie in two strata. Those who were in the upper stratum, lead prestigious life having paid grants-in-aid with honours and privileges too. The low stratum was less paid as well as did only manual works with daily allowances, No doubt this show the gradation in the *Devadasi* system.

Funeral Honours:

Since a *devadasi* was married to the immortal, she was hailed as a *nityasumangali* "ever auspicious female". Tradition holds that on her death no worship was conducted in the temple. The dead body was to be covered by some *kantanki-celai* (a king of saree) and to be consumed by the fire-wood supplied from the temple. The *Koyil Olugu* narrates the story of a boon granted to a *devadasi*. When the Lord asked: "What boon would you want?"; she replied: "Whenever any of my creed dies, the fire for cremation should be fetched from the temple kitchen, and to them must be offered a certain quantity of rice from the storehouse, and also *tirtha* (sacred water), garland and *parivattam* (a piece of cloth). The sacred ash from a Siva temple or tulasi from a Vaisnava Temple was sent. The whole village participated in the funeral and her death was considered a public loss. A *devadasi* was always cremated as *sumangali* (auspicious female) wearing the trinket (*tali*). After the cremation the temple was purified and the God was served a curry of bitter vegetables. Thus the life of a *devadasi* came to an end.

Conclusion:

The inscriptions and literature of the Cholas provide ample for sketching the history of the *devadasi* system. Delving deeply into the system of Devadasi, one can easily bring all the matters as greenery scenes in the serene even a frizzle of facts without falling down. The *Devadasis*, though performed multifaceted works,

they were entirely converged towards cultural and spiritual services. It is clearly known that their lives lay in two strata. Those who were in the upper stratum, lead prestigious life having been paid grants-in-aid with honours and privileges. Whereas those in the low stratum less paid and did manual works for daily allowances. During Sangam Age and after, especially during the period of the Cholas, the sculptures, inscriptions, *Ula* literature and various other sources of those days provide ample evidences to trace their history. We are in the limelight regarding the origin of the *devadasi* system and how it flourished. The names and other particulars of some 400 dancers are furnished in the inscriptions. This system covers *Tanjiccheri* very broadly. The girls were either voluntarily engaged or made to be Devadasis by their relatives, especially by their parents. The dancing girls' adornment from the hair to heels with valuable costumes and ornaments show how affluent they were. Their dances were performed in *Mandapas* and *Arankas* in great temples. The varieties of music and the instruments, the postures of dancers and *karanas* show their expertise in the field. It is true that the *Devadasis* got from the public both acclamation and condemnation.

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